[25th January 1933

Mr. A. RANGANATHA MUDALIYAR:—" Was the recommendation of the Committee to give retrospective effect?"

The hon. Diwan Bahadur S. KUMARASWAMI REDDIYAR:—" This question does not relate to retrospective effect."

[*Note.*—An asterisk (*) at the commencement of a speech indicates revision by the Member.]

II.—ADJOURNMENT MOTION *RE* THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE MUNICIPAL WARDS IN MADURA.

* Mr. K. R. VENKATARAMA AYYAR:—" Sir, I beg leave of the House for moving an adjournment of the business of the House to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the proceedings of the Government in the Local Self-Government Department notifying the division of the Madura Municipal Council wards in Notification No. 54 in the *Fort St. George Gazette* Extraordinary issued on 19th January 1933."

Mr. SAMI VENKATACHALAM CHETTI:—" I second it."

* The hon. the PRESIDENT:—" I wish the hon. Member will convince me about the urgency as well as the great public importance. If he satisfies me about them, I shall consider the admissibility of the motion."

* Mr. K. R. VENKATARAMA AYYAR:—" I am glad the hon. the President has called upon me to explain . . . "

* The hon. the PRESIDENT:—" I don't want a long speech over that."

* Mr. K. R. VENKATARAMA AYYAR:—" The fact is that the Madura Municipality was previously divided into eighteen electoral wards in the last elections, which were held previous to the supersession. In 1931 when the Municipal Council was functioning, for over a period of about three months from April to June, the Municipal Council took up and considered the question of the re-division of wards. Public notice was given to all the inhabitants and interests concerned to give them an opportunity to make adequate and proper representations of their objections or otherwise in the matter. The Municipal Council made its own proposals, and eventually the Inspector of Municipalities went down from here and was present at the meeting of the Municipal Council to help them in arriving at a fair re-distribution of the wards. In accordance with his advice and in consultation with him the Municipal Council drew up a scheme of wards. And in this the Inspector himself acted not only in consultation with the Municipal Council but also on the representations of various interests concerned. He acted only after satisfying himself as to what was the most equitable and fairest mode of distribution, due regard being had to the interests of various communities and vested interests. Eventually Government approved that scheme and notified it on 16th June 1931. There was some little discontent apparently in some quarters; a representation was made to the Government, and the Government enquired into it, found it to be baseless, and confirmed that redistribution by issuing a Government Order in

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August 1931. Administratively this scheme came into force, and the 29 wards system has prevailed from July 1931. Electoral rolls were published with effect from July 1931. Somehow or other in the latter half of 1932 some scheming interested individuals apparently brought up a complaint against that distribution of wards, particularly stating that the wards were manipulated by the late Chairman, Mr. Tulasiram, so as to secure an undue strength for his Sourashtra community. That complaint was again gone into by the Special Officer who was in charge of the Municipality. The Inspector of Municipalities was also asked to go into this, and this time he happened to be Mr. Tampoe, and not Mr. Gopalaswami Ayyangar. The Special Officer examined the distribution of wards, and this investigation he spread over some months. The Special Officer sent in his report in October 1932 bringing out very clearly that there was not the least foundation for the allegation against Mr. Tulasiram. Mr. Tampoe endorsed that report, and the old distribution of 29 wards that had been already notified in accordance with the report of Mr. Gopalaswami Ayyangar was again confirmed by Government by a Government Order which was received by the Special Officer on the 1st December 1932. Now the elections are notified to be held on the 11th February and the counting on the 13th proximo. They were waiting to see the announcement in the notice board of the municipal office. That notice was about to be put up on the 6th of this month. Two holidays intervened. Various intending candidates had already begun to canvass votes. They had purchased copies of electoral rolls. But, on the 9th instant, a few letters were sent round by the Special Officer to a few select individuals that the manager of the Inspector's office had arrived in order to consider the re-distribution of wards; who that manager is nobody knows; but we find a re-classification of wards put up, apparently done in consultation with interested individuals, evidently because the chances of success of some of the intending candidates were not bright. Therefore, a public meeting was held in Madura representing various communities. As nearly as one thousand people mustered in the Town Hall, and all communities, Sourashtras and non-Sourashtras, Hindus and Muslims, all gathered there to denounce this eleventh-hour distribution of wards. The meeting authorized a body of persons to wait on His Excellency and the Chief Minister on deputation on this matter. I headed that deputation. Mr. Tampoe also came to Madura and stayed there for 24 hours or less than 48 hours, and then he came here to inform Government of what really happened there. Now under the law 15 days' notice is required for the scrutiny of electoral rolls, to receive claims and objections and deciding them. Now we are asked to go for election not upon the old rolls, not upon any valid rolls, and much confusion has been introduced, if not also bitter discord between the Sourashtra and non-Sourashtra communities, for which there is no justification. Now there is no time for the preparation and scrutiny of electoral rolls, for receiving claims and objections and for final publication of the rolls. All statutory rules

have been given the go-bye. Much was made yesterday of these rules; and here is a case which goes counter to all of them. In fact there is no time for observing all these rules; and yet the elections are proposed to be held very early. So, is not this matter urgent, is it not public, and is it not important?"

* The hon. the RAJA OF BOBBILI:—" In the file I also find, Sir, the opinion of the Collector, Mr. Hall . . . "

Mr. ABDUL HAMEED KHAN:—" On a point of order, Sir, may I know what the hon. Minister is saying? Is he going into the merits of the whole question and giving his reply to the adjournment motion?"

* The hon. the PRESIDENT:—" The hon. Member will kindly wait for a couple of minutes."

* The hon. the RAJA OF BOBBILI:—" The opinion of the Collector of Madura, Mr. Hall, one of the most experienced and efficient officers of Government, is as follows:—

11-15 a.m. 'I have had the allegations in the petitions investigated by one of my Deputy Collectors and hold that the Special Officer had cause for suspecting that the division of the municipality into wards by the late Chairman was so manipulated as to secure a predominance of Sourashtra councillors. Even a cursory examination of the wards leads to show that wards Nos. 3, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27 and 28 would go to representatives of the Sourashtras, because the population therein consists entirely of Sourashtras . . . etc.'

" On looking into this, Sir, I felt convinced that the matter is of sufficient importance to merit a re-investigation. The Inspector was asked to go to Madura and examine the reasons given in the petition and submit fresh proposals to the Government, if he was convinced that there were proper grounds for re-classification of the wards. On receipt of his report the Government have carefully gone into the details and when it was found that the Sourashtra community which is only 20 per cent of the population is likely to secure a large block of 12 to 14 seats in the municipality and the interests of all the other communities have not been properly taken into consideration, I felt convinced that there was a case for revision. No doubt the original proposals were approved by the Government but I also felt convinced that a mistake had been committed, and when time is available there is no harm in rectifying the mistake. New proposals have been made and dates have already been fixed in February, and on the 13th the results will be declared. So, within the time fixed in the original order, i.e., the 14th February, the elections will be completed, and there will be no need to extend the period of supersession. In view of the statement I have made, Sir, I feel there is no necessity for this adjournment motion."

* The hon. the PRESIDENT:—" After hearing both the sides, I think that this has assumed some importance and urgency. I therefore hold that the motion is in order. Does any hon. Member object? (After a pause.) Objection not having been taken, the motion will be taken up for discussion at 4 o'clock this afternoon."